Bang Chan Canal bissected the community and joined, about one mile south, Sāensāeb Canal, a broad old waterway connecting Bangkok and Minburī with the canal network of the central plains. A well-raised, year-round road which ran between Bangkok, 20 miles to the southwest, and Minburī, two miles east, cut through one side of the area. On it lay Bang Khūat, another community, about eight kilometers from Bang Chan (cf. Kaufman:1960), and a cluster of houses called "Kilō paet," (Kilō 8) both west of Bang Chan and nearer to Bangkok. A shallow canal flanked this road most of the way.

The town of Minburī with district offices, shops, and pharmacists, and a good-sized Muslim population was well-known to most of the residents of Bang Chan. Its middle school drew from the surrounding farming countryside, including Bang Chan, those few pupils whose educational aspirations led them beyond the local elementary school. Minburī had electricity, but no telephone or telegraph facilities.

For nine months of the year, while Bang Chan lay under water, most of the marketing was done through boat-vendors who plied the canals. During the dry months, or for large festivities, people marketed at Minburī, Kilō paet, or in Bangkok.

The Thai government administered Bang Chan through two district offices (amphoe), one located in Minburī, the other in Bangkapi, close to Bangkok. The common boundary of their respective districts happened to run through the middle of the community. Seven local head men, each in charge of one of the seven hamlets (mūban) into which the entire community was divided reported to one or the other district office. They transmitted instructions from their superiors to the farmers, maintained order mostly by their personal prestige, and kept the village census more or less up to date by recording and reporting marriages, births, and deaths.

At the center of the community was the cherished Buddhist temple with its abbot, monks, and novices, numbering 15 to 30 depending on the season. The elementary public school, occupying one of its buildings,[1] was attended by 300 children aged eight to fifteen, both Buddhist and Muslim. The temple compound was surrounded by a number of houses, including a cafe and stalls for small vendors. A small country mosque (surao) in another hamlet was the religious center for the Muslim minority, some of whose children attended another school just outside the Bang Chan community. The abbot and the imam, the respective local heads of the two religious faiths, were of importance in the community as leaders.

1. A new large school has since been built away from the temple compound.

4:Phillips E-4,5 (1956-1957) 1966
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621 631 essentials not atypical of the region. Instead of villages being organized administratively on the basis of natural social groupings and demarcations—that is, social centers and groups with which people feel a primary identification, in Bang Chan's case the local Buddhist monastery and government primary school—so that governmental and social units are isomorphic, they are gerrymandered into highly arbitrary administrative units. Thus the village of Bang Chan is comprised of seven *muubaan* or hamlets, at the head of which are seven hamlet headmen; these hamlets are located in two different *tambon*, or communes (four in one commune, three in the other) headed by two commune headmen, neither of whom lives in Bang Chan; the two communes are located in two different districts headed by two different district officers and their staffs; the two districts fortunately are in a single province, Phranakhoon, the same administrative unit in which the metropolis of Bangkok is located. Yet the people who reside in these varying hamlets located in different communes and districts all perceive themselves as living in the single village of Bang Chan. The fundamental organizational problem here is that since the sources and lines of governmental authority do not follow the lines of the natural Bang Chan community, jurisdictional conflicts and confusions arise to threaten the effectiveness of those community-wide programs that occasionally may be initiated. For example, during a diphtheria immunization campaign in the village (Hanks and Hanks 1955), the public health officer from one of the district offices was reluctant to immunize all the children of Bang Chan on the grounds that some of them came from hamlets outside his district's jurisdiction; he yielded, as the Hankses note, only when a perceptive villager pointed out that if germs knew no boundaries why should he?

Not all villages of the Central region have such real or potential administrative difficulties. (And Bang Chan does not have them too frequently either, principally because the government does not initiate too many community service programs.) However, the basic organizational principle which admits them—that houses are grouped together as administrative "villages" on the basis of conceptual neatness rather than socially functional criteria—is a common feature of the administrative structure of the Central Plain.

621 792 184 171 The foregoing account describes some basic culture patterns which Bang Chan shares with other villages of either the region or the nation. In addition to these broader patterns, Bang Chan has certain traits which inevitably refer to local village conditions and contingencies. For example, the most active and viable social unit in Bang Chan beyond the familial level is the order of Buddhist monks associated with the monastery. It is the only organization within the village that has been successful in mobilizing community activity (Sharp *et al.* 1953), although much of this activity has

4:Phillips E-4,5 (1956-1957) 1966
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596 602 *156 [609] and not only in the abstract, symbolic sense. Non-kin are approached in the hope that they eventually may be treated as kin; good government officials are unabashedly described as being like "good fathers"; the basic patterns of respect that are learned and practiced in the family are extended to relationships outside of it, although inevitably in more formal ways. There is no *rigid* psychological cleavage between the sentiments of kinship and the sentiments about individuals outside of the family. Conversely the mere fact of kinship does not assure that individuals will be given special emotional treatment: often the love between friends is greater than the love between kin (see the case of "Dang," his father, and father's friends in Hanks and Phillips 1961, or the case cited earlier of the man who left his wife because of his fondness for an employer). Kinship represents to the villager relationships of warmth, familiarity, and conviviality, but also unpredictability and undependability. Such is the nature of most human contact in Bang Chan.

621 596 [662] *[156] In this type of cultural situation, one does *not* find arising the type of community power struggles or schisms apparently characteristic of many peasant communities (see Foster 1960–61). Bang Chan is indeed a placid community because no family has the organizational means or the quality of familial cohesiveness necessary to assume a dominant social, political, or economic position. Individuals assume important positions and individuals disagree and squabble, but rarely families. In surveying the cultural landscape of Bang Chan, I often wondered whether the basic unit of anthropological and sociological, as well as psychological, analyses was perhaps not the individual rather than the family, monastery, school, or village itself.

BANG CHAN

FOREWORD

114 The Cornell Thailand Project, like other Cornell University studies in community development, is a long term investigation in the field of the processes involved in changing cultural behavior in a non-industrialized society. Field research was begun in 1948 in the central plain of Thailand with base line studies of the rice farming community of Bang Chan and its environs. A collaborating staff of Thai and Americans representing different disciplines has continued to work in Thailand at Bang Chan and elsewhere in a series of phases extending to the present.

[113] The first interim report issued by the Project gives a general account of the economic, political and social organization of Bang Chan in 1948-49 together with some material on [128] health and diet (Sharp et al., 1953). Since the circulation of this first interim report was limited, some of the salient characteristics of Bang Chan should be outlined here.

361 Bang Chan is located some twenty roadmiles northeast of Bangkok, the rapidly growing major metropolis and capital of Thailand. The village is between two and three miles west of a small district administrative center and market town, [48] Minburi. A century-old canal and to the north of it a post- [991] war hard surface road connect Minburi and Bangkok so that villagers have easy access to these two centers by boat or bus.

621 In 1954, when data for the present study were still being 162 gathered, the population of Bang Chan was about 1700, divided among about 300 households. Roughly 60 per cent of the house- [592] holds were made up of independent nuclear families consisting of parents and unmarried children. The average size for all families was 5.7 persons. Rice farming was the main occupa- 243 tion of 80 per cent of all families. The population in 1954 241 worked and lived on about 2800 acres (7000 rai) of land. With the exception of some 120 acres (300 rai) used for the home [463] sites and home gardens scattered along the network of canals in the village, all land was devoted to the cultivation of wet [311] rice. Nutritional density is thus practically the same as population density. Of the rice crop, 60 per cent or more may be sold, the remainder providing seed, feed, and the staple [132] food of the people. During the wet season and into the cooler 224 dry season, from May or June to February, the growing of the single crop of rice is the main activity. The hot dry season [517] from March until the rice planting begins again is a period of fiestas, ceremonies, and visiting.

621 The Thai countryside is divided into hamlets, each with a headman in charge of the thirty to sixty households of the [622] hamlet. Seven such hamlets constitute the Bang Chan community. [128] (In the Project studies they are identified by the initials BC and KY followed by a number).

*243
434 on a small plot that they own or rent, but all families
463 in this category derive their main income from wages.

3. Trader. Main income from the more or less regular sale, not production, of rather considerable amounts of goods. Perhaps somewhat arbitrarily, we have not included in this category those very few families who derive their main income from production of cookies or the like, even though such families might themselves perform the selling of their products to local consumers; such families are included in the 'home enterpriser' category below.

[426] [427] 4. Investor. Main income from land rent, interest on loans, and/or speculative gain.

5. Professional. Main income from such specialties as midwifery or dramatic entertainment.

434 647 463 6. Public servant. Main income from, or majority of working time spent in, government employment. This is the only category in which we had to add the additional criterion of "majority of working time"; government pay is rather low, and one person who works full time in the employ of the government actually receives more income from other sources. [875] This category includes regular government officials, teachers and school janitors. The hamlet headmen are not included, [622] however, as their main incomes are otherwise derived and their remuneration from the government is extremely low. They maintain no daily routine as public servants. The headmen are all farm operators, except one who is an investor.